DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA
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THE CHURCH . . .
WRESTLING WITH
THE WORLD TODAY

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6 Lenten Addresses
By The Rt. Rev. Robert L. DeWitt
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"THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION"

Back in the early '40's, Fortune magazine ran an editorial entitled "The Light That Failed". It was a sobering assessment of the state of religion in these United States. It scored the lack of leadership on the part of religious spokesmen. It underlined the widespread religious illiteracy of the laity. And I remember one sentence: "Most Protestant churchgoers retain only a dim awareness of what their religion is all about".

A very few years thereafter came the post-war religious boom. Church membership and attendance rose dramatically. You may remember a popular book from that era by Henry C. Link, entitled "The Return to Religion". It seemed that the light of religion was really turned on again.

But today? It would seem that the Fortune editorial of the early '40's was correct. The post-war religious boom seems to have been just that. It was a temporary easing of a downward trend, and the trend has now resumed. The lack of religious certitude seems to have spread from the laity to the clergy. This is the age when clergymen seem so silent on many issues of faith and morals, reflecting a confusion they seem to share with the laity. The norms seem to be shifting. Faith seems to be faltering, and our time has produced the significant popular greeting: "What do you know (for sure)?"-because certainty seems to have escaped us - in religion as in other areas of life.

What can we do about this loss of certainty? There is an understandable temptation to erase uncertainty with certainty. If our faith be faltering, to try harder to believe. We hear again and again that we need to have faith. This is somewhat like a blind man being told he ought to see. A deaf man being told he ought to hear. A lame man that he ought to run. I have seen a blind man pretend he could see. I have seen a deaf man act as though he heard. I have seen a lame man try to run. And I have observed people of weak and confused faith attempt to conceal this with an attitude of absolute certainty. Thus, the pathos of pretense reaches even into the realm of religion.

So the first thing is that we should try to understand our confusion, not conceal it. We should not cloak or dissemble before ourselves and others, let alone before God. We should freely admit that this is the way it is with us. We are uncertain about many aspects of our religion. And there is great precedent for this. You remember the great Old Testament story of Moses and the children of Israel in search of the Promised Land. How did they reach it? By the following of a definite prescribed course in a posture of absolute certainty? Far from it. That pilgrimage of theirs is described as their "wandering in the wilderness for forty years!" A wandering that was marked by the falling away of many, at times by the yearning of most to return to the slavery of Egypt. Had Moses been asked how they were to get to the Promised Land, he would have

responded by a confession of much uncertainty. He did attempt to restore the flagging spirits of his followers. He did send out scouting forays to test his course. And Moses he knew that living honestly with his uncertainties was the mark of a true pilgrim.

In more modern times has come the scientific revolution, and its great impact on religious certainty. I recall once hearing the famous theologian Paul Tillich speak of this. He told of the initial impact on the faith of people by the beginning of scientific analysis of the Bible. It had long been thought of as the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired. But now new questions arose, scientifically investigated: Who wrote it? When? Is it infallible? What about the relation of evolution to the Biblical story of creation? Said Dr. Tillich, "You who were not living in Germany at that time will never know what it meant to seem to have all of your religious certainties pulled out from under you". A few months ago a priest of the Orthodox Church spoke to me of this same issue. He told of his people, many of foreign birth, who wanted their church to remain completely as they had known it in the old country; and at the same time many of their children were anxious for reform and adjustment to the realities of American life. The priest went on to say: "The Church is sometimes spoken of in the Bible as the 'Bride of Christ'." This is very accurate, he said. Because Christ says to the Church, his Bride, "Let us move on". And the Church replies, "Dear, can't we stay where we are?"

Like immigrants, we are all living in a ghetto, the ghetto of our past, walled in by what has been. But the walls of our time - ghetto - are breaking down, as they did with the children of Israel, as they did in the time of Tillich, as they do with the immigrants of all times and all places. The new age is bursting in upon us. Are we uncertain? Bewildered? We should be! So this is the first thing: We should try to understand our confusion, not conceal it. We should freely admit that this is the way it is with us.

But second, we should focus on our main objective. If we were to think of the world as a stage, it is as though we were being called upon to act out two scenes at once - the same cast, on the same stage. Not long ago we knew our lines, we were familiar with the set, we moved with certainty on the stage. Suddenly, before we have completed that scene the actors for the next scene begin to move on stage. The set begins to be shifted. The new characters speak to us, expecting our new lines from the second scene, and we respond with our old lines from the first. What can we do? Can we remember the plot of the play well enough to improvise new lines until the scene is completely shifted, and the confusion is ended? We cannot simply continue to mouth the lines from the former scene. Many of them simply do not fit.

No, we must drop some of our lines, no matter how carefully we have learned them, no matter how familiar we are with them. And, mindful of the main theme of the play, we must listen as carefully

as we can to the new lines addressed to us by the actors in the next scene, and respond as creatively as we can.

The central concern of our time is how to live creatively with change. If we hold still, the world nevertheless changes about us. Like the man who still lives in the same house he lived in many years ago, but now finds he is living in a completely different neighborhood, because the neighborhood has changed. This is our analogy of the actors on the stage.

But there is another way of looking at change. And that is the kind of change encountered when we are not passively, but actively involved in it. Like migrants, nomads, people on the move. Suppose you are leaving one home in search of a new one, and not certain where you will find it, nor when. You yourself have moved not too long ago - at least the average American changes his residence every five years. And it is hard to move. One of the many problems is the sheer expense of the moving company. It means hard decisions as to what to take with you. Everything you take with you is at a high premium. But if you have no moving van, you would really be under pressure to travel light. If a chair, a table, a book case is not essential, it gets left behind.

This is our situation in the Church. We are on the move, and we must travel light We have been in our present home a long time. Our accumulation of ecclesiastical furniture is great. Church buildings. Liturgical practices. Membership patterns. Church government. Clergy training. Clergy functions. Denominational

identities. How much of this is essential? How much of this can be left behind? To travel well, we must travel light. And in this era, we must travel. We are the present-day religious pilgrims.

So I say to you who are bewildered, or resentful, or confused, or uncertain, or nostalgic, - or all of these things, return to the fundamental theme. And what is the fundamental theme, the plot, of the drama of life we are acting out on the world's stage? The central plot is whether, and how, we can become what we are meant to be, as individuals and as a world society. Whether, and how, we can grow into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. We are followers of what the early Christians called "The Way". We are disciples of Christ. Our faith is in Him, as Redeemer and Saviour. Therefore, we believe in Him. This means that His words we make our words, His loyalties become our loyalties, His concerns are our concerns. His life, His death, His resurrection become the model of our life, our death, our resurrection.

It can perhaps be put even more simply. What is the central plot, the theme of the drama of life? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbor as thyself. Have you ever thought of how profound that familiar phrase is: "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"? It assumes, it hinges upon your loving yourself. That unfathomable mystery which is you, is to be loved. That unique creation, unlike any other, which is you, is to be loved. Is this a strange thought? You are made in the image of God, - surely such a creature is worthy of love. And love your neighbor in the same

way, for he too is made in the image of God. Love your neighbor as yourself. And when you understand love of neighbor and of self, then you also understand what it means to love the Lord thy God. For they are like unto each other.

This is the fundamental theme of life: love. There is nothing in the confusion of our times which eclipses it This means you can love the bewildered, the resentful, the confused, the uncertain, the nostalgic - even and especially if that person is you, yourself. For thus will your life be bracketed by the Great Covenant, the dependable providence of God. And the light that seemed to fail will shine again. We do see through a glass, darkly, particularly in these times. But now abideth faith, hope and love. These three. But the greatest of these is love.

* * *

O God, the source of all good gifts, we thank Thee for the rich heritage which is ours in Thy Holy Catholic Church. Thou hast done much for us already, and we believe that Thou hast also much to give and teach us in our own time. Grant that Thy Church may never settle down to mere contentment with the tradition of the past. Grant that it may be alive to all new movements of Thy Spirit in the hearts and minds of men. May it stand always for the removal of injustice and the vindication of righteousness and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"AMERICANS, THE CHOSEN PEOPLE?"

One of the great prayers in the Book of Common Prayer begins with the words: "Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage, we humbly beseech Thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of Thy favor and glad to do Thy will..."

What does it mean to be a nation mindful of God's favor? And what does it mean to be a nation glad to do God's will? And, more especially, what do these questions mean for us, as Americans, citizens of the United States?

It suggests first of all, a sense of identity. The prayer speaks of "our heritage". That we are, by the grace of God, Americans. And we should treat this fact with respect, as a fact which is a manifestation of the providence of God. Quite simply, it means we should love our country. If a man does not love the family that produced him, if a man does not love the community that supports and sustains him, if a man does not love the nation that protects and defends him, he thereby renounces his birthright, he renounces his very identity, he renounces a part of his own selfhood.

But to be a nation mindful of God's favor means more. It means not just being glad we are Americans, but also it suggests an awareness of the source of our national blessings, - that they come from beyond us, that they issue from a divine source. And our American tradition, the national consciousness, is aware of this. In a very definite way this religious awareness has become a part of the American self-understanding. Our nation has appro-

priated a great deal of the religious tradition of those who first came to these shores. The words "In God we trust" on our coins, the words "One nation, under God" of our pledge of allegiance, are but surface manifestations of a far deeper fact, - the pervasive sense of a transcendant destiny at work in our history. In the early generations of our nation American children were commonly given Old Testament names, - Elijah, Ephraim, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joshua. Those of them who knew the Bible found a clear parallel between the Israel of the Old Testament and the people of the new world. Had not many of them, like the Jews in Egypt, been on bondage in their old home in Europe? Subject to poverty, to conscription, to old established tyrannies both religious and political, they had gone out from their Egypt, had crossed their Red Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, and had wandered in the wilderness for many years in search of the Promished Land. And God had guided them. They had gradually found, and, under God, had formed, the promished land. Equality, opportunity, bountiful national resources, freedom to worship God as they chose, - it was a land of plenty for all. And so evolved the American Dream, a close parallel to the Promised Land of the children of Israel. The Book of Exodus seemed to be their story in a very literal way. But even more. Came the tragedy of the Civil War, the emergence of the figure of Abraham Lincoln, his sacrificial death, and the binding together again of the sundered nation into one union, - and then the New Testament figure of sacrifice, death and resurrection became very real to them as a description of their

national history. And even in the religiously uncertain times of today politicians still go to church as conspicuously as possible, and acknowledge God in their public utterances, at the very least reflecting their shrewd recognition that Divine Guidance is a value treasured by their listeners. Surely in some real sense we are and have been a people mindful of God's favor.

But the people of this America have done a new thing in their attempt to express their religion, they have created a new church form. We call it the separation of church and state. One old form had been the state church, found in many parts of Europe. The ancient hope had been that in the welding together of Church and state an institution could be forged which rightly could demand the ultimate loyalty of their people. But thousands of immigrants came to these shores because of their deep conviction that that state/church institution was not worthy of their ultimate loyalty. Another old form had been the sect, which was a small group of believers, dealt out of the game, withdrawn, setting their hopes not on this world but the next, with no stake in the nation, no responsibility for the nation. And the frustration, the helplessness of this religious form had driven many others to these shores. And here together both types of religious background have devised a new thing, - a free Church in a free society. A society free of any established religious forms or controls. A secular society in the best sense of that word, - free to respond to the facts of life and the forces of history in the most appropriate way, unhampered by a crippling

ideological strait-jacket, political or religious. And not only a free society, but a free Church also, free to worship as it pleases, to assemble as it chooses, and free to fulfill its mission. And its mission is to be the voice of God, endorsing those things in Church and state which are consistent with the will of God, and challenging those things in state and Church which are not consistent with the will of God. A free Church in a free society cannot agree to fence off certain areas of life as belonging to other gods, national gods or any others. If the state feels it is beyond criticism by religion, it is saying the state is God. If political matters are beyond criticism by religion, then politics is God. If economic matters are beyond criticism by religion, then economics is God. If a social system is beyond criticism by religion, then that social system is God.

Listen to this excerpt from a campaign speech: "The streets of our country are in turmoil. The universities are filled with students rebelling and rioting. Communists are seeking to destroy our country. Russia is threatening us with her might, and the republic is in danger. Yes, danger from within and from without. We need law and order! Yes, without law and order our nation cannot survive. Elect us and we shall restore law and order. We shall by law and order be respected among the nations of the world. Without law and order our republic shall fall." (Excerpt from a campaign speech made in 1932 by Adolf Hitler.)

As Americans, we know well the importance of law and order. As Christians we know the importance of justice. As American Christians we know the risk of seeking law and order at the expense of justice. Both the Nazis and the Communists have demanded that the Church keep out of politics. We know this fact, and we well know the danger of it. Under both types of totalitarianism, the policy is to reduce the Church to purely private religion. This makes it possible to have law and order, but at the expense of justice. The demand that God be a purely private affair risks having public policies that are Godless. There are those who make the same demand on the Churches in America today. And ominous are their voices.

This is an ancient problem. We are forever indebted to the Jews for the incredible pilgrimage they made from polytheism - the belief in many gods - to the concept of monotheism - the belief in one sovereign God. The Old Testament records many of the dramatic and agonizing steps in that pilgrimage toward the understanding that there is one creation, one God. They were chosen, yes, but chosen to lead the rest of the world to this same discovery, this same healing faith. And then the thundering of the Old Testament prophets, that even they, Israel, the chosen people, were under the judgment of God if they did not do His will. And the flashing insight of the prophets that even the Gentiles, born beyond the laws of God, were not beyond the love of God. And "chosen people"? God would choose as His people those who did His will.

We said earlier that our nation has incorporated a great deal of Biblical tradition and faith into its national life and self-understanding. We spoke of how natural it is for America to identify with the Exodus, with the coming to the promised land. And even to see in the Civil War, the martyrdom of Lincoln and the reunion of North and South, a dramatizing of the sacrifice, death and resurrection told of in the New Testament. "Mindful of God's favor"? In many deep ways, we as Americans are. But we have borrowed from our religious tradition selectively. We have focused on those portions which underscore our being the chosen people. What about the other part of that great prayer, which asks that we may be a people "glad to do God's will"? We rejoice in the mighty acts of God in creating this remarkable nation. But what about the thundering word of God heard in the judgments of the Old Testament prophets?

As we look about our country, we rejoice in the purple mountains' majesty, but what of the slums and ghettoes of this land? We rejoice in our America, but what of "the other America" - the America of poverty, disease and despair? We glory in the westward expansion which bound the Atlantic to the Pacific under the stars and stripes, but have we talked about this with the Cheyennes, the Sioux, the Dakotas and the Blackfeet? We pride ourselves on the incredible industrial expansion which has made this the leading nation of this century; but what of the forced labor of black hands, black backs and black minds which made so much of this possible? The Jews of

the Old Testament, because of the depth of their conviction that there is only one God, who has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the earth, concluded that God had not only chosen them, but also judged them. So with America.

We spoke earlier of loyalty to family, community and nation, that to lack such loyalty or love is to renounce a part of one's very selfhood. However, if we love our children, for example, we know this implies necessarily our obligation to criticize them, to confront them with the claims of what they are meant to be. Implicit in constructive criticism of a child is the unspoken faith that he is capable of better things. So with our community. If we love it, as we love ourselves, we will be sensitive to its inadequacies, anxious to draw attention to them, because we know it was meant to be and can be a better community. And our nation? Who can set himself up as wise enough to criticize our nation? Truth is a big thing. Who can boast of possessing it? Yet we must live by the best fragments of truth we have. And the gathering of fragments of truth is our best approach to the whole truth. Every fragment is precious. So each must be free to offer his portion of truth to the welfare of all. Therefore, if we love America we will be her strongest critics, critical of her past postures, critical of her current trends which we know are not worthy of her. And we make such criticisms, if they are valid, not in our own name, but in the name of a higher Good, because our nation is not the highest Good. That position is reserved for God alone. And that God is one who judges not only individual people. He is also

the God of the nations. And like a plumb line, His justice will test the nation. As Lincoln said of one of the great days of judgment in our history: "If every drop of blood drawn by the whip must be requited by blood drawn by the sword, - then are the judgments of the Lord true and righteous altogether."

We are to be a people not only mindful of God's favor toward us, but also a people glad to do His will. If we love God, we will work for justice for all people, because He is the God of all people, and because He alone is God.

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"SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL"

A familiar statement often heard today is the comment: "I don't feel like a person, I feel like a number." The comment is made variously with reference to one's relationship to the utility company, the government or even the Church.

This kind of protest about "feeling like a number" highlights one of the major problems and concerns of our world today: the relationship between society and the individual, the relationship between the institutions and organizations of our modern world, and the people who comprise them.

I recall once in a sociology classroom hearing a student ask the professor: "Why all this recent emphasis on city planning? Why can't people in cities be free to live and build as they please?" The professor reflected for a moment, then replied thoughtfully: "Well, we've tried it without planning for a long time. Now let's try it with planning." And as one surveys the unplanned sections of Chicago, Los Angeles, New York or Philadelphia, he can appreciate the quiet melancholy of the professor's response. It is a similarly sober assessment of society's needs which has led to the troublesome but necessary governmental regulations in many areas of life, from car inspections to taxes. Like law itself, regulations are necessary in many areas of life. Like law itself, these regulations or systems

are a constant threat to personal freedom. We must, therefore, have a society in which there are wise, effective systems for the ordering of life, and we must also safeguard the freedom and fulfillment of the individual person.

Historically, Christian thought has not espoused either society or the individual to the exclusion of the other, but has supported the necessity for both. Christian thought has traditionally said that man is a social being. A <u>social</u> <u>being</u>. He is a <u>being</u>, therefore he is a distinct individual. But he is also a <u>social</u> being, an individual, but an individual set inevitably by the will of his creator in a network of relationships with others. The attitude of Christian thought has been that society is a vehicle for individuality, a vehicle which must be kept under surveillance and repair, but which must be kept. And the reason for this is that love for the individual is always mediated through or made possible by these human structures, or networks of relationships, or "social institutions", as we call them.

Let us look at this more closely. We said that love for the individual is always mediated through or made possible by these social institutions. The <u>family</u> is one such social institution. The Book of Common Prayer contains a prayer "For a Blessing on the Families of the Land". It begins with this sentence: "Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who settest the

solitary in families; we commend to they continual care the homes in which thy people dwell." The family, as a social institution, is the school in which most of us have learned the meaning of love. Without the social institution which we call the family, there is no such thing as family love in its varied forms; the love of father for son, of son for mother, of brother for brother. I recall once counselling with a young man who was deeply divided against himself and alienated from his world. He asked me what God meant to me. I responded that God, to me, was something like a father who loves and cares for and accepts me. He replied: "I've never known a father like that."

People <u>can</u> learn the lesson of love apart from the family, - if they can find an adequate substitute. Many a staff person in an orphanage, many a teacher or scout master or Big Brother has served as a surrogate father, and been a channel for the love of God. But for many ages of human history, the family has been the norm, the usual channel, for this great lesson. And even in the life of a family, we find ourselves confronting the central question in the relationship between society and the individual. The question is: What is the meaning of love when applied to a family or any <u>other</u> social institution? We know what love means in terms of the relationship of individuals to <u>individuals</u>, but what does it mean in the relationship of individuals to <u>groups</u>? And then we find ourselves groping for another word which fits

this meaning. And we discover the word "justice". When parents try lovingly to divide up the necessary household work among the children, they discover that love becomes justice. They discover that their love for each individual child requires their being just in the allocation of work. <u>They discover that justice is love distributed.</u> They discover that love requires them to guarantee for each child the access to dignity and freedom. Not the <u>possession</u> of dignity and freedom, for it is up to the individual child whether he appropriates what is offered. But to guarantee for each child the <u>access</u> to dignity and freedom. They discover that, in a family, justice is love distributed amongst the numbers of the institution, in this case, the family. Justice is love distributed.

It would seem clear then that human institutions are meant to be structures wherein love for the individual is manifested by justice for all. Of such social institutions, the family is only one example. There are others. Most of us would agree with this. Love should not stop at the door of the family home. The door of the home is not to keep love in, but to let it out. Most of us would agree that we should also love our neighbor, for example. But who is our neighbor? Recall the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The man who fell among thieves did not live near the man from Samaria. And as is true of many of those we pass on the street in a great city like Philadelphia, he didn't

even know him. Further, he was a part of a group which was alienated from and even hostile toward the people of Samaria. What was their common identity? What was the family to which both belonged? They were human beings. That was their common family. And the lines of their lives intersected that particular day on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. That was their point of contact. That was all. And that was everything. And the clear meaning is that all human relationships, all social institutions, are the proper realm for justice, that is to say, the proper realm for the distribution of love. To be more specific, this means that all social institutions, - the family, schools, colleges, business, government - are to be human groups, like human families, for the development of justice, for the offering of the opportunity for dignity and freedom, which is the distribution of love. And therefore, all social institutions are the proper groups for the removal of injustice and oppression. You say you love your neighbor. But you do not love an oppressed neighbor if you do not seek to remove what oppresses him.

A current illustration of this principle in American society is the problem of work and income. An exploding population, and the developments of automation and cybernetics have conspired together to create a gigantic problem in our society with reference to work and income. Government economists have proudly predicted that the number of unemployed persons will be reduced,

although there will still be, they say, a small percentage of unemployment. And at a low unemployment figure of, say, 3%, this means 2½ million people unemployed! And what is supposed to be the reaction of those millions of people who make up that so-called small percentage of unemployed? This is the great test - perhaps even the final test - of our American democracy. Namely, whether we are concerned enough to devise a workable system of society for production, distribution and consumption which utilizes the potentialities of our technological society, and which at the same time insures access to dignity and freedom for all - including that so-called small percentage of unemployed - a mere 2½ million people or more.

This is a peculiarly difficult question for this America of ours, and for us who are its people. For so long, we have regarded as a divine law the attitude of rugged individualism which was appropriate in frontier days: "The Lord helps those", we say, "who help themselves." And this is usually said by those who have been helped enough by circumstances, like good endowments or good opportunities, or both, that they are able to negotiate life with some adequacy. But what if there are those for whom there is no work to be had, a chronic condition in this industrial society? Or what if he or she is unable to work, by virtue of age, infirmity or family responsibilities? What then? What is the family answer to this problem? It is rather obvious

is it not? The family is a group which is dedicated to providing access to dignity and freedom for all its members.

And like a family, our democracy is of the people, by the people, and for the people. One of the great parables of our particular time is the Welfare Rights Organization, with its insistence that the receiving of welfare is not a privilege, but a right. Their insistence that all members of this democratic family are entitled to the access to dignity and freedom. Of course the Welfare Rights Organization is only insisting on what the law provides. But there is a need to insist. And in so insisting, they are upholding the family ethic in our democratic society.

Some time ago, I talked with a man who told me that each member of his family was on a salary. I asked what he meant. He replied: "Just that." His ten-year-old boy was on a salary. His job was to go to school, do his homework, get an education. His fifteen-year-old daughter was on a salary. She had a job to do in life. His wife was on a salary. So was he. Each was doing his job in life. Each was entitled to a salary. Now, what that man was doing with his household financing was obvious. In a way, every family does it. Every family recognizes the legitimacy of each member doing what is appropriate to his age, his circumstances, his opportunities. Most families don't call it a salary; but food, clothing and shelter, the access to dignity and freedom, are provided for all.

As one current writer has thoughtfully pointed out, work and leisure are ambiguous terms. We speak of work, in the broad sense, as activity directed toward an objective. A man cutting wood on his day off is doing work. But we also speak of work in a narrow sense, the kind of work for which one receives a pay check. So with the word, "leisure". We speak of leisure in a passive sense as idleness, "goofing off" we call it. But we also speak of leisure as the creative use of free time. As when a man cuts wood on his day off. It is clear that the one definition of work includes the one definition of leisure. They are not as neatly separated as we tend to think.

Society and the individual? Our God is a God who sets the solitary in families, as a network of relationships in which His love can be made manifest by being distributed as justice to all the members. The key to the solution of the problem of our emerging technological society is to see it as a family. Because it is a family. The family of mankind, whose father is God. Whose God is its father, and which therefore, under that father, is a family. And whose father wills that love be distributed, as in a family.

* * *

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who settest the solitary in families; We commend to thy continual care the homes and all the other institutions, in which thy

people dwell. Put far from them, we beseech thee, every root of bitterness, the desire of vain-glory, and the pride of life. Fill them with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness. And so enkindle fervent charity among us all, that we be evermore kindly affectioned with brotherly love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"THE FAMILY OF MANKIND"

Recently I was speaking to a woman who told me her husband was in Hong Kong on business. Being that far away, and not having done much world traveling, he had decided to return home not as he had gone, but by going on around the world, something he had always wanted to do. She went on to say that before his departure, his young grandson had asked him where he was going. With understandable pride, the man had drawn himself up and replied: "I am going around the world." Unimpressed, the boy asked: "How many times?" This incident is humorous, but it also has its serious side. That boy has watched television. He is native to the era of the countdown, the blastoff, the orbiting, the re-entry and the splashdown. He knows that going around the world - such a romantic adventure to his grandfather - is an exercise that requires only 90 minutes in orbit. He has seen the moon from the earth, and he has seen the earth from the moon. Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase, "Global Village" to describe our earth. If you can get around a town in an hour and a half, it is not a very big town. And you can get around this global village of ours in an hour and a half. Think of the new attitude, the new approaches this requires of us, in our understanding of our world. This is one fact about the family of mankind.

Another fact, equally sobering, is the fact that 150 years of the industrial era have resulted in a radical disproportion in the way essential resources are distributed across this world of ours. The result is an agonizingly sharp distinction between the have and have not nations of the earth. Industrialization (or "development" as we call it) is radically unequal. Some people fly, at the speed of sound, over other people who are bending over the soil, tending it as did their ancestors 5,000 years ago. And therefore wealth is unequal. Health is unequal. And even progress is unequal. The rich nations get richer and the poor nations get poorer. And these economic tensions lead to political tensions and the political tensions lead to war. This is a second fact about the family of mankind.

We have spoken of the shrinking of our world, bringing the nations closer geographically, and the gross inequalities in our world, pushing the nations farther and farther apart, economically and politically. This is tragically parallel to the relationship between the white and black races in this country. But we know all this. Why spend time talking about what we already know? Because, as with the cleavage between black and white in this nation, we still don't appreciate the significance of it. We don't understand the explosive potential in the nations of the world being pressed closer together at the same time they are growing farther apart. When the world was big, we could think

think small. But now the world is small, we must think big. This is evidenced by the fact that precisely as the situation grows daily more crucial, the "have" nations and particularly this country, suddenly seem weary of well-doing. The tragic action of the last Congress in reducing foreign aid is illustrative. "We have done so much to help them," we say with sanctimonious sadness. Yet the fact is that, for example, the average annual <u>increase</u> in the gross national product of this one nation is equal to the <u>total</u> gross national product of all the nations of South America. Is this fact the occasion for self-congratulation on how able and affluent we are? Or is it an occasion for sober apprehension? I think the latter. I don't know if statistics are helpful in this matter, but the so-called developed countries of the world spend on defense <u>alone</u> an amount three times the <u>gross</u> national product of all of South America. Yet we feel that we have done so much for them, and they aren't really very appreciative. America, someone has said, is in the predicament of a very wealthy, middle-aged spinster who wants to be loved for her own sake. And, we say, not only did they not appreciate what we gave them, they also wasted some of it. You know, corruption and all that. But in terms of waste, what about the crashing of one American bomber and the millions of dollars it cost? Just for example. And even <u>we</u> are scandalized by our waste of natural resources, the air, the water, food. We

have done so much for the underdeveloped countries, so our representatives in Congress seem to feel. And yet if we gave just one percent of our gross national product to foreign aid, to stimulating the industrialization and the economies of the underdeveloped countries, it would be a thrilling step, way beyond what we are presently doing.

Not many years ago there was a figure in American national politics who coined a new word: "globalism". He was subjected to great ridicule. Some punster coined the derisive retort that "globalism" was "globaloney". A few years later, and not so many years ago, another figure on the national political scene spoke insistently on the theme, "one world". People didn't ridicule him. But neither were they convinced that they really lived in one world. And today? The use of the word, "globalism" or the phrase, "one world" would not be an empty expression, nor a pious utterance, but simply the reading of the sobering signs of the times.

Sobering, because it is one world, yet behaves as though it were not. There is no moral neighborhood to match our physical neighborhood. I think we are much deceived by talk of ideologies and isms. The tensions and the conflicts of today's world are not, at root, tensions and conflicts between philosophies, but tensions and conflicts arising from desperate, crucial human need.

Think of China and its three quarters of a billion people. We have been schooled in this country to think of it as "Red China". Almost one word. Beyond the pale. Not to be admitted to the councils of the nations. One-fourth of the people of this earth? Never mind. They are bad people. But read some one of the few books published in this country which tells something of the problems of ignorance and deprivation and disease and death with which these people have been wrestling for decades, for centuries. While we are struggling to raise even higher our highest standard of living in the world, they are struggling - to live. And many lose the struggle. The typical American attitude was characterized by one writer as the wish that three-fourths of a billion Red Chinese would disappear and be replaced by three-fourths of a billion middle class Americans who want to buy refrigerators.

The world, this family of nations, has an increasingly clear choice between seeing this earth as the arena for vicious tribal territoriality, or seeing it as the patrimony of mankind. That is to say, we are either hostile tribes, defending our turf still as in the savage childhood of humanity, or else we are a family of nations who have received an ample inheritance from our father. If a family of children, because of an arbitrary and unequal distribution of possessions, became so vicious with each other that they demolished the home in which they lived - this would be the parallel to the threat which hangs over our world, like

a cloud - in the shape of a mushroom. Now, let us quickly add that sinful pride in nations, as in individuals, is inordinate, irrepressible. If all nations were equal, there would still be no end of greed. But that is quite a different matter from the threat of starvation, of human extinction. As the people of Biafra. Of India. Yes, of Vietnam.

The same Christian principle applies here as in our own national household. Blessed with the gift of personhood, all people are entitled to the rights and privileges of personhood. It is their right. One of the great needs of our world is an international welfare rights organization. Do you remember "the four freedoms" - freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom from war and freedom of religion? Those four freedoms of the United Nations were proclaimed while the world was still writhing in the agony of World War II, and they must be recognized and implemented, lest this world writhe anew in what may well be its death agony. As with children's quarrels, a parent sometimes says, indulgently, "boys will be boys". Sometimes, impatiently, if it is more serious, "Do you have to carry on like that?" But sometimes, imperiously, "stop that, immediately!" This is what the nations of the world need to be told. Tribal territoriality may prove to be the fatal flaw which doomed mankind. Seeing our world as the patrimony of mankind, our inheritance from our heavenly father, may yet be the salvation of mankind.

One cannot think of this problem without being sobered by the ancient imagery of biblical phrases. The Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man. In that ancient, ignorant world, how could they have been so wise? "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein." "All the beasts of the forest are mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills. For the whole world is mine, and all that is therein." "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me."

The political priorities of the world reveal the soul of society. The world sets its own political priorities, and so determines the state of its soul. What is most important to us, will have devoted to it our resources, our efforts. It has been said we do not break God's laws - we break ourselves upon them. But if our priorities are not God's priorities, we are still free to set them, - and to regret them. An ancient story tells of a man speaking to a wise rabbi in an attempt to ridicule him. The man held a live dove covered in his hands. Said he, "Rabbi, is this bird dead, or alive?" If the rabbi replied that the bird was dead, the man could show it was not. If the rabbi said it was alive, the man could quickly break the bird's neck and show it to be dead. "Rabbi, is this bird dead or alive?" Replied the wise rabbi, "The answer is in your hands."

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Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, Guide, we beseech thee, the nations of the world into the way of justice and truth, and establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteousness, that they may become the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

"YOUTH"

Does this sound like a fair description of the more obvious, the more vocal of the young people of our time: "They are first of all outrageous. They are bad citizens, refusing public employment and avoiding service in the army; and while they claim toleration for their own creed, they have no toleration for others; every god but their own they openly call a devil. They have no temples, no altars, no images, - and boast just that. Fathers and teachers, they say, are mad or blind, unable to understand. Nor have they any great interest in respectable people who observe the rules of society and try to keep it running; they care only for the outcast and miserable. To be a sinner, they seem to say, is the one sure way to be saved. They are altogether of a seditious and revolutionary character." Actually those words are an attempt of a 19th century historian to characterize the Christians who arrived on the scene in Rome in the second century.

Now, I think it would crowd one's credulity to make the sweeping assertion that the youth of today are deeply Christian. Equally erroneous is it to attempt to write them off as long-haired and wrong-headed. Rather, let us recognize that God is doing something in our midst, let us consider it carefully, and see what we can learn from it. What we can learn about them.

Perhaps what we can learn about ourselves. Possibly what we can learn of God's will for His world.

I would like to make five observations. First, these young people must be taken seriously. We are witnessing no light thing, to be dismissed with a shrug of the shoulder. There is a sea-change taking place, the depths are being stirred. The disdain and the disruptiveness they display towards society are not to be taken as superficial airs to be outgrown in a year or two.

I say this for two reasons. First, there is a striking "youth culture" emerging which is no local, American phenomenon, but a world-wide manifestation. Put simply, young people have more in common with other young people around the world, than they do with their own adults. More than adults do with other adults around the world. The Beatles, with their universal appeal to young people, are a symbol of this. Second, these young people, like Black Americans, have little stake in the past, and their chief hope is in the future. The Ship of Society is slipping away from its wharf in the port of the past, heading for the open sea of the future. These young people are determined to be aboard. We do well to be concerned, if <u>our</u> ties are with the <u>past</u>, when we see our world <u>and</u> our young people slipping away from us. This is my first point: Today's young people must be taken seriously.

My second observation is that they have a deep investment in the abolition of war. Their concern obviously is not to protect the investments of the past, but to preserve the promise of the future. The political priority-setting which mounts unnecessary military defense at the expense of not building new cities and new nations, to them is mad, obscene. For this reason they cannot comprehend a society which is outraged at the burning of a draft card, and not outraged at the burning of whole countrysides. One psychiatrist was asked what he thought was the best therapy for students who were severely alienated by the war. Said he: "Stop the damn war!" Alienation is not necessarily an illness to be healed. It may be a much-needed force for change. Is it possible, rationally, to argue with this concern for peace? "No, just with their methods." Their methods? Do any of the methods of the peace movement - demonstrations, disrupting of speakers, destroying of draft cards, sit-ins at induction centers, political action - compare with the methods of war? The pain in some part of the body is a heaven-sent sign that something is wrong. It is the illness crying out for cure. The pain expressed by those who make up the war resistance movement is a heaven-sent sign of a society that is ill, a world crying out for cure. President Eisenhower said years ago that war is no longer viable as a means of settling international disputes. Young people today

by the thousands are acting out that conviction. My second observation: Young people have a deep investment in the abolition of war.

Third, I would observe that youth today is spurning more and more the idolatry of self, and the peripheral extension of self. They are often criticized for not being patriotic. Yet, to them, an overweening loyalty to my family, my class, my race, my religion, my nation, - is idolatry. Some months ago I had occasion to wait for a train on a railroad platform. A large billboard was nearby. The poster on it had considerable areas of blank space, - always a standing invitation to creative expression. The invitation had apparently been accepted, for some young person had written in a large hand: "Greetings to you from an anonymous human being." And beneath this, some other young person had written: "Thanks!" This looking upon the people of the world, known and unknown, as a group to whom one expresses greetings, is curiously close to what in theology is called monotheism - the belief in one God who has created all, and who thereby bestows a oneness on His creation. It produces the kind of attitude which wrote the familiar children's hymn: "This Is My Father's World". It brings a sense of belongingness. When young people are criticized for not being patriotic they would respond that their prime loyalty is not to a part, but to the whole. And this explains their wariness of making an idol of self, - or the extensions of self.

Fourth, one hears in numerous ways today the rejection by youth of the oversimplified distinctions with which we who are older are so familiar. We are so clear about good and evil, about right and wrong. To us the world is populated by Robin Hood, on the one hand, and the Sheriff of Nottingham on the other. The Free World and the Communist World. People who are honest and hard-working, and people who are dishonest and shiftless. People who are neat and clean and tidy, and people who are not. People who go to barbers and people who don't. And they? They seem to have an easy tolerance for pluralism in all these things. They are not "hung-up" on these things. They have a deep respect for "doing one's thing" as they say. They seem to sense that norms are shifting. They seem to prefer fact-finding to fault-finding. Of an interracial marriage, they would say: "Why not?" (And, as the General Convention of the Episcopal Church said, in 1964, "Why not?") Of long hair, perhaps thinking of Benjamin Franklin, they say: "Why not?" Of beards, perhaps thinking of Abraham Lincoln, they say: "Why not?" Young people today are not lightly taken in by overdrawn distinctions. They respond easily and naturally to the shifting patterns of life which mark our times.

Fifth, and last, there is a distinct tendency on the part of young people to have a greater appreciation for things that are only good in the giving. Perhaps this is why the guitar is such

a symbol of our time - and of our youth. It is almost as though the guitar is trying to challenge the dollar sign as the great symbol of our society. America is known and feared the world over because of its fantastic wealth. Yet one European traveler reports that one of the common sights in Europe is American youngsters singing with their guitars in the cafés of Paris. They are trying hard, many of these young people, not to get "hung-up" on things. And this is particularly interesting because one of the characteristics for which American adults are most despised, and which they most deplore in themselves, is their customary materialism. And suddenly their children display their great appreciation for things that are only good in the giving! Like music. Like exchanging ideas. Like love.

I am concerned about our young people. The disdain and the disruptiveness they display is threatening. But threatening to what? My hope in them is related to this question. Of what are they disdainful, disruptive?

I see them disdainful of schools, but not of learning. I see them disdainful of educational systems, but not of truth. I see them disdainful of police and legal systems, but not of justice. I see them disdainful of international diplomacy, but not of peace. I see them disdainful of the church, but not of human values. What do we say of a class of people who seem to have deep respect for learning, truth, justice, peace, human values? In this is my hope.

But I also have my fears. My fear arises from my deep conviction that these young people of today, like the youth of all times, need the proclamation, the Gospel, the message of the church. Because they <u>are</u> on a risky course.

I would have to agree with them that they do not need a church which is concerned over the manicuring of their morals - morals that are just mores, shifting customs. A church which so misunderstands its own precious truth that the chief thing it can say to young people is that they should cut their hair, is a church which deserves to be turned off.

But I speak rather of the weightier things. The self-understanding of what it means to be human. The deep, perennial nature of pride, of self-deception, the dangerous deceit of utopianism. The need to trust in God and His genuine future, rather than to trust in one's own projection of an imagined future. The springs of hope which arise with a crucified but risen Christ out of the ashes of disappointment and apparent failure.

Yet these deep things of our religious faith will not be theirs if the church remains, for them, a charged field, repelling them. And the church is repelling young people. They are not, in these times, picketing the churches. They are simply ignoring them.

What do we learn about young people? What do we learn about ourselves as we listen to them, as we watch them? What do we learn of God's will for His world? We learn that they need the church. We learn that the church needs them. God is trying to recreate, to redeem a world. It needs it. He has manifestly chosen the young generation to help Him in His task. They show many signs of being willing instruments of His. And able instruments. It is God's will for His world that these young people be not deprived of their heritage of hope and self-knowledge.

May the doors of our churches be opened to young people, because God's truth is their heritage as much as it is ours. May we listen to them as much as we expect them to listen to us, because they have much to teach us. May we give them responsible places in the life and decisions of the church, because they know some portion of the charting of these new seas better than we. May we increasingly give them a hand on the wheel, for they are the helmsmen of the future.

* * *

O most loving Father, who willest us to give thanks for all things, to dread nothing but the loss of thee, and to cast all our care on thee, who carest for us; Preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, and grant that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is immortal, and which thou hast manifested unto us in thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"THE CHURCH WRESTLES WITH THE WORLD"

Robert Frost once wrote that he had a "lover's quarrel" with the world. A current religious writer has so described the relation of the church to the world: a lover's quarrel. The church does have a quarrel with the world, but it is a quarrel which grows out of its love for the world.

What is the quarrel about? Why does the church quarrel with the world? It would surprise no one if we were to say the reason for the quarrel is sin. Those of you who are older remember the story about Calvin Coolidge, the man of few words. Returning from church once he was asked what the sermon was about. "Sin," he replied. Asked what the preacher had said about it, he stated: "He was agin it." Yes, the church is against sin. But let us look at this word more closely. What is sin?

Being a word of deep significance, it might be helpful to try to describe it in different words. Creation, the Bible teaches us, is good. It is from God. "He looked upon everything that he had made", says the Book of Genesis, "and, behold, it was very good." But it inevitably happens that this creation forgets that it <u>is</u> good, and, losing sight of that fundamental fact, begins to act as though it were not good. This means <u>you</u>. You are a part of creation. You are therefore good. But there are so many things that happen in the course of any one day, so many

things that are done, so many things that are said, that cut one down, that seem to devaluate one's worth. So you forget that you are good, you cease to believe it, and you come to act as though you were not. This world also is good. But it forgets this, it ceases to believe it, and comes to act as though it were not good. This is the state, the condition of Sin - capital S - the failure to remember the goodness of creation, the ceasing to believe in the goodness of creation. And what we call sins - small s - are the specific attitudes, the particular thoughts, the behavior which result from this forgetting, this ceasing to believe in the goodness of God's creation. A man who forgets, who no longer believes, that it is a good thing for him to be the man he is - made in the image of God - acts accordingly. He comes to think it is a small thing to be the person he is, and then his actions reflect his low self-estimate. A world which forgets, which no longer believes, it is a good world, the Kingdom of God - acts accordingly. Its life reflects its low self-estimate.

A novel by Pierre van Paasen many years ago told of the Abbe de la Roudaire, pastor of a small church in a French village. In that village there was an unfortunate hunchback. Returning home late one evening, he was set upon by a group of drunken young men who had lost their capacity to care about themselves, and so also to care about others. They ridiculed the poor hunchback, then

tied him to a lamp post. Then beat him. He died of the injuries. Three days later the funeral was held in the church. As though driven by a collective sense of guilt, the entire town turned out for the service, for they had all failed to care about this unfortunate neighbor, the hunchback. The Abbé mounted the pulpit for the sermon. Said he, "When I come to the last judgment the Lord will say to me, 'Abbé de la Roudaire, where are your sheep?' And I will answer him nothing. And again the Lord will ask me: 'Abbé de la Roudaire, where are your sheep?' And again I will hang my head and not answer. But when the Lord God asks me the third time: 'Abbé de la Roudaire, where are your sheep?', I will raise my head and answer: 'Lord God Almighty, they were not sheep, they were a pack of wolves!'"

The Abbé was not right. They were not wolves, they were sheep. But they had forgotten, they had lost sight of the fact that they were part of God's good creation, the sheep of His hand, - and so they more and more acted like wolves. The fruit of this forgetting of true status, of not believing it, means the loss of hope. And a world without hope quickly becomes a hopeless world. It becomes a world which creates a situation, a present, which is not worthy of it. It becomes a world which needs to be called out of its present into the future - a future worthy of it - God's future. This is the quarrel of the church with the world. This is why the church wrestles with the world.

As one modern writer has put it: "Faith, wherever it develops into hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience. It does not calm the unquiet heart, but is itself this unquiet heart in man. Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world. This hope makes the Christian church a constant disturbance in human society." In our own words, we might say that the church is constantly calling out to the world: "Come out of the unworthy present. Come to the future. Be the good world you really are!"

And the rejection of this hope? The rejection of hope, the failure to hope, the stubborn refusal to remember who and what one really is, as an individual, not to remember one's true status, - this is incipient suicide, the beginning of self-destruction. It is the beginning of being careless - not caring about one's health, one's welfare. Careless - not caring about honesty, integrity. Being without hope leads to being without care. Hopelessness leads to carelessness, or as they say, "not giving a damn". So with a <u>world</u> which refuses to remember what <u>it</u> really is, the goodness of its creation. It also is on a suicidal course, tending toward self-destruction. Can anyone deny this tendency in our world today? How else can one read the self-threat of a society which is failing to see the valid aspirations of its young people? A world which, having been

blessed with individuals, who in turn have been blessed by being set in social institutions, nevertheless insists on setting individuals against society, and society against the individual? A society which becomes callous about the poverty and hunger of most of the people of this world? A nation which stubbornly demonstrates Kipling's lines about the

"...heathen heart that puts her trust
in reeking tube and iron shard,
all valiant dust that builds on dust,
and guarding, calls not thee to guard..."?

How else can one understand a church which, intended to be the salt of the earth, seems bent on losing its savor?

Yet, is this not where we live? Has it been very long since you have heard people rail at our youth? Or complain about feeling like a number, not a person? Or criticize the efforts of the jobless to find jobs, or the hungry to find food? Or villify other nations for not appreciating our meagre generosity? Or wonder what our nation's priorities are? Or grumble about what is happening to their church? And you, yourself? How is your morale? Your "hope quotient"? How clearly do you see, how well do you remember, the goodness of being you, the goodness of your world?

For this is what is at a high premium these days - in every realm of life, the need for those who can hope. The need for those

whose hope becomes, in Kierkegaard's words: "A passion for what is possible."

An old church in England was once built entirely by the efforts and courage of one man, at a time when the nation's fortunes were at a very low ebb, disaster was stalking the land, and hope, frightened by disaster, had sunk with fortune. The inscription to this man's memory on the stone in the churchyard reads: "Whose peculiar honor it was to do the best things in the worst times, and hope them in the most calamitous."

There are those in <u>our</u> midst who are doing the best things in the worst times, and hoping them in the most calamitous. There are young people, who are utilizing their young minds to find ways whereby democracy can be made to work in every sphere of our American society. There are statesmen who, with fires breaking out all over the world, are steadfastly working for peace in the Mideast and, God help us, in Vietnam. There are white businessmen and black leaders in Philadelphia who are groping for ways to bridge the gulf between black and white. There are political leaders in Washington who are struggling to avoid a <u>crass</u> manifest destiny and instead to find a <u>divine</u> destiny for this nation. There are religious leaders, clergy and lay, who are seeking to renew the savor of the religious salt, to rekindle the light that failed. And thank God for all these, who are doing the best things in the worst times.

But is this kind of effort a product of optimism? Is this type of service a result of thinking, naively, that give us a few months, a few more years, and everything will be okay? Superficial optimism is not the kind of soil which will produce this kind of fruit for very long. This is Christianity's basic difference with Communism. Not Communism's passion for equal justice, which often puts non-Communists to shame. But rather the naive utopianism of Communism that deludes itself and its people that "give us a few more years, and we will right all these wrongs". No, what we are speaking of is not optimism. It is something far deeper, far wiser, far more sober. Saint Paul said it in I Corinthians, that if our hope in Christ is good for this life only, and no more, then we deserve more pity than anyone else in all the world. No, in this life there is a <u>lot</u> of bad news, and optimism will not erase it. People who do the best things in the worst times do it <u>despite</u> the bad times. And with no assurance that the bad times are going to go away. It is the joy of a sure <u>hope</u>, as the Bible says, not the joy of a sure <u>thing</u>, as we would like to think. Ask Richardson Dilworth or Mark Shedd. Ask Roxanne Jones, president of the Welfare Rights Organization. Ask any priest of a small struggling church. Ask any of the great company of leaders in Philadelphia's Black community.

No, Christianity speaks not of optimism, but of Good News. Good News which does not cancel out the bad news. But Good News which co-exists with the bad news. But above it. Which reaches down to it. Which touches it. Which, as we say, redeems it. Supersedes it. Next Friday is Good Friday. The day of all days that recalls to us the cross. The central symbol of our faith. And what is the meaning of that symbol? It means that in the measure that our faith is in Christ, our faith is in One who was crucified. Our faith is in One who was faithful despite defeat in this world. Our faith is in One who supremely did the best things in the worst times.

We frequently use the word "incarnation". By this word we signify our faith that God came amongst us - was "embodied" - which is what the word "incarnation" means - came amongst us as one of us. As though to say to us: "This is the way to do it." And lives His life, and died His death. "Who, for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God", so the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it. Or, as Christ himself said: "In the world ye have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." Therefore, one who has faith in Christ has faith in himself. One who believes in Christ believes in himself. And one who believes in himself is enabled to believe in others. He becomes the focus of a good infection - the

infection of trust. And that is what this world needs. Desperately.

And so it is that the church has a lover's quarrel with the world. The church is determined to continue to quarrel with the world over the world's own self-estimate. The church is determined to continue to wrestle with the world. Why? To pull it out of its unworthy present toward its promised future. A future which goes beyond this present, which stretches beyond the rise and fall of nations, a future which outreaches history and time, and leads us into God's future. The church quarrels with you because you have forgotten what and who you really are, a person made in the image of God. The church wrestles with the world because the world has forgotten what it really is, the kingdom of God.

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O Thou who didst create the heavens and the earth,
and didst breathe into the body of man thine own spirit,
be merciful to us in this dark age, that in the midst
of the world's desolation we shall remember thy kingdom
of peace and light, building into our hearts and hopes
all that cannot be built as yet into the world. Amen.